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SIPDIS

EUR/SCE FOR PAUL PFEUFFER AND JERRY ISMAIL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL GR MK EI EUN

SUBJECT: IRELAND "FAVORS" SETTING DATE FOR EU-MACEDONIA
TALKS

REF: STATE 117721

Classified By: Political Officer Todd Huizinga. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

¶1. (C) On November 25, Poloff discussed reftel points with John McCullagh, Counselor for EU Enlargement in the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and his Deputy Mark Daryl Erickson. On setting a start date for formal EU accession negotiations with Macedonia, our interlocutors referred to Irish Prime Minister Cowen's press release on his November 19 meeting with Macedonian PM Gruevski, in which Cowen confirms that Ireland is "favorably disposed" towards setting a date for accession talks. McCullagh elaborated, however, that Ireland supports setting the date "in principle" and would likely defer to "EU member states more directly concerned" on whether a date should be set at the December 10 European Council meeting.

¶2. (C) On the name issue, Mark Daryl Erickson noted Ireland's impression, despite positive atmospherics as reported reftel, that neither the Greek nor the Macedonian side appears to be moving toward a mutually acceptable solution. McCullagh said the decision on whether to set a date for accession talks would probably be made before December 10, at the EU Foreign Minister's meeting (GAERC) on December 7-8, and be endorsed by EU leaders at the December 10 EU Council meeting. Our interlocutors did not offer a prediction on what that decision would be.

FAUCHER